

# VENTURA COUNTY STAR

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## Motorist gets 9 years for killing bike rider

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A woman was sentenced Wednesday to nine years in state prison for the drunken driving hit-and-run death of a bicyclist in Agoura Hills in 2010, according to a lawyer in the case.

Stephanie Segal, 45, of Woodland Hills, was sentenced by Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Larry Mira, who is assigned to the court's Malibu branch, said attorney Mark Hiepler. Hiepler, based in Oxnard,

filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against Segal on behalf of victim James Laing's wife, Lulu Laing.

Segal in December pleaded guilty to vehicular manslaughter and no contest to leaving the scene of a serious accident, Hiepler said.

James Laing, 46, who taught at an English-as-a-second-language center on the campus of California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, died on Oct. 23, 2010, shortly after being struck by Segal's car as he was riding in a bicycle lane on Agoura

Road near Liberty Canyon Road, according to the lawsuit.

Segal fled the scene but was apprehended by a Los Angeles County sheriff's deputy later that day in a nearby Cheese-cake Factory parking lot, according to law enforcement reports.

Her blood alcohol level was 0.26 percent — more than three times the legal limit of 0.08 percent, Hiepler said.

Lulu Laing, a fellow professor who lived with her husband of 13 years in West Hills, described in a written vic-

tim impact statement how her spouse's sudden death "turned my life upside down."

"Jim and I had been super happily married for 13 years," she wrote. "My friends all know we were the two happiest loving birds on Earth. On Oct. 23, 2010, our perfect, loving life was destroyed when my dearest husband was hit by a drunken driver.

"Jim's tragedy not only has destroyed my happiness, but also the peace and serenity of my family, as well as Jim's family. I know I can no longer be

as happy as before."

Hiepler said the wrongful-death lawsuit previously was resolved with a "substantial settlement."

"It is our hope that today's nine-year sentence, as well as the civil accountability, will send a message to the community about the real life consequences of drunk driving," he said. "The death of James Laing continues to produce an ongoing ripple effect in the lives of his wife, their families, the cycling community, and in the lives of each of his stu-

dents who admired him.

"It also is our hope that this criminal sentence will force people to be more respectful of the rights of law-abiding bicyclists," Hiepler said.

Segal, who remains free from custody and has been enrolled in a drug and alcohol rehab center since the accident, is scheduled to surrender to start serving her sentence April 16, Hiepler said.

A makeshift memorial for Laing near the accident scene by fellow bicyclists remains there to this day, Hiepler said.